

CREWKERNE URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

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ANNUAL REPORT

of

THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

For the Year ended 31st December, 1951

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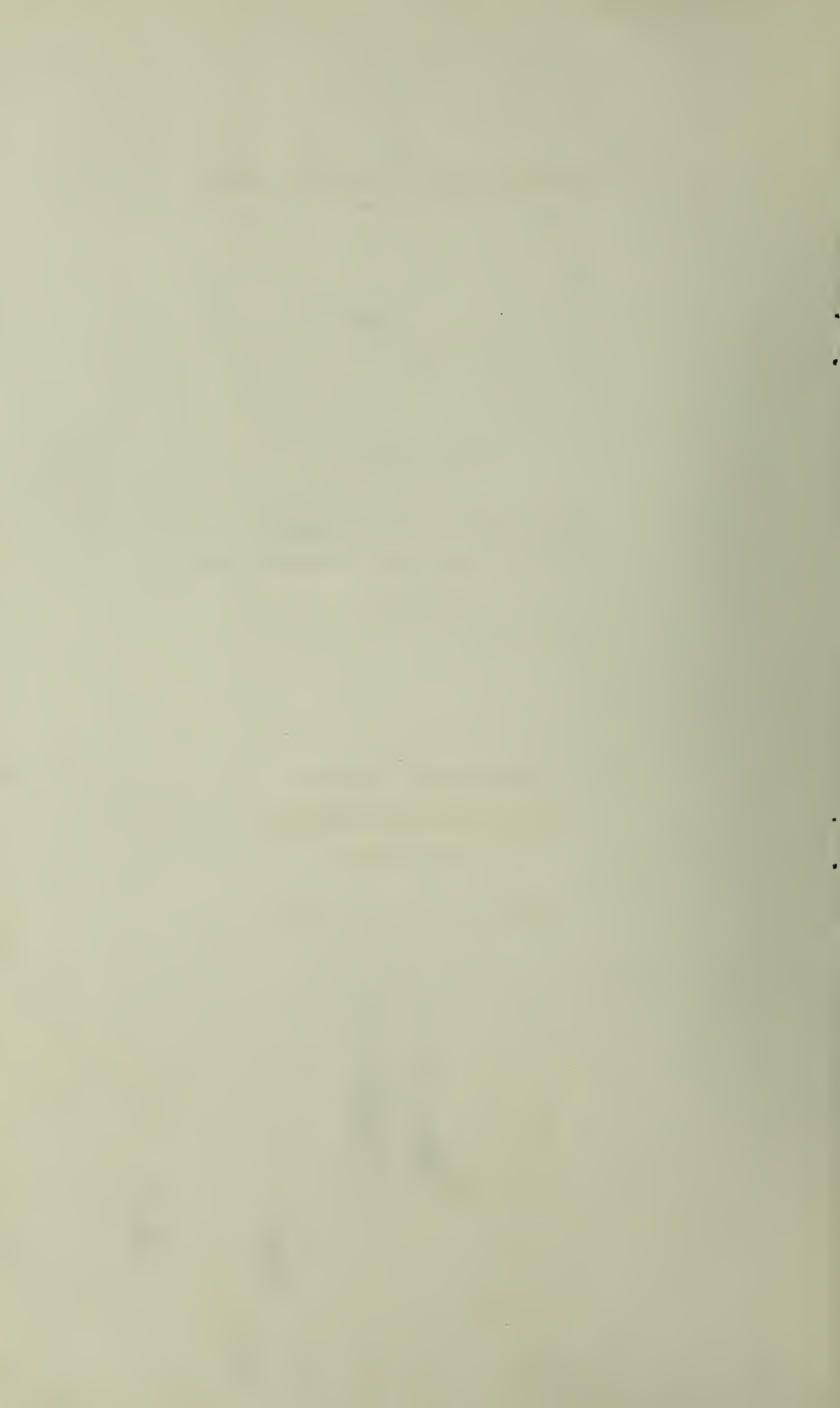
PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER:-

Medical Officer of Health

Dr. A.M. McCall

M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., D.P.H.

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TO THE CHAIRMAN AND COUNCILLORS OF THE CREWKERNE URBAN DISTRICT

Gentlemen,

I beg to submit my Report for the year 1951.

Last year I pointed out that the work of Preventative Health Services is often overlooked due to the fact that the greatest progress is marked by the absence of cases of disease and deaths. As this report refers to a Festival Year, I thought it of value to look back over the last twenty-five years and see what progress has been made in Crewkerne during that time. Further, I have referred from time to time in the text to what I consider the most interesting advances that we have made in order to emphasise the value of the routine and seemingly dull work carried out by your Public Health Committee and Officers.

The National Health Service Act of 1946 was a social revolution in itself and although it marked an outstanding effort in Health Legislation, not all of its provisions were as wise as the Government of the day expected and in my Report I have referred to the good and less satisfactory effects of that Act as they occurred in this town.

I am,

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

A.M. McCall

Medical Officer of Health



## SECTION A

### Statistics and Social Conditions of the Area

#### Population

The Registrar General gives the estimated mid-year population for 1951 as 3,927. There has been a small but steady increase in the population of Crewkerne during the past twenty-five years until the peak was reached in 1950 the number being 4,175. Appendix A, Table 1 shows the general statistics for the town.

#### Birth Rate

The Birth Rate for the year was 15.5 per thousand and is identical with that of England and Wales as a whole. It is a slight increase on the figures for 1950. Full details are shown in Appendix A, Table 2. Of the sixty-one children born in the area, twenty-seven were at home and thirty-four in hospital.

#### Death Rate

Chief causes of death are shown in Appendix A, Table 3. The rate for the year was 14.5. per thousand. This is slightly greater than 12.5 for England and Wales as a whole but when allowance is made for variation in population, that is when the total is multiplied by the comparability factor, the figure is 12.1 which is satisfactory. Once again Heart Disease was the most killing and alone accounted for over a third of all deaths.

#### Infant Mortality

There were no cases of infant mortality during the year and only one still birth.

#### Maternal Mortality

I am pleased to report that no cases of maternal mortality occurred in Crewkerne during the year.

#### Social Services

The Old Folks Club, the formation of which I reported last year, has flourished and continues to fulfil a need in the town. There are fifty members. The average attendance has been between thirty and forty throughout the year. The activities of the club are of a social nature and have brought much happiness to the members who, left to their own devices often tend to become solitary.

## SECTION B

### The General Provision of Health Services in the Area

There has been a gradual tendency during the last twenty-five years to centralize administration of all kinds. This affected the Public Health Services like many others, and culminated in the National Health Service Act of 1946 which transferred the responsibility of many local Health Services to the County Council. This no doubt made for ease of administration but has not always proved beneficial to the local areas which had been progressive and had administered their affairs efficiently, bearing in mind the particular needs of their community. Many County Councils are recognising this fact and I feel that the next quarter of a century



will show a swing of the pendulum back with increasing delegation of authority.

In Somerset the general policy has been formulated by the County Council. The local details have always been left to the area Medical Officer, such as myself, with the result that the Services have continued with minimum disturbance.

### Care of Mothers and Young Children Infant Welfare Clinics

Following considerable delays and many disappointments, I am very pleased to be able to report that in 1951 the new Public Health Clinic was opened in Church Street and the Infant Welfare Clinic commenced to hold sessions there in June. The accommodation is excellent for the purpose and provides Waiting and Weighing Rooms with adjoining Consulting Room. Outside there is a pram shelter and the necessary lavatory and washing accommodation. Provision is also made for the making of tea which is always available during Clinic sessions.

Clinics were held twice a month and 1,089 children attended during the year. This is slightly fewer than the year before although the number of mothers attending showed an increase. The average attendance per session was forty mothers and forty-five children. The Doctor saw 133 cases in consultation, vaccinated fifty-seven and immunised seventy. This shows how the Clinic has come to be recognised in Crewkerne. Many will recall that it was commenced by a Committee of ladies in the town who felt the need for such a service. They secured the help of all General Practitioners and hired a room for a clinic which was held originally once per month. The 1946 Act took the responsibility away from the voluntary body, but I am happy to say that many of the original Committee are still actively associated with the Clinic and I think the town must be grateful to them for their pioneer work. The present organisation of the Clinic is in the capable hands of Mrs. Smith to whom my thanks are due.

### Ante-Natal Clinic

With the opening of the new Clinic, the District Nurses commenced to hold a clinic twice a month for expectant mothers. This started slowly but is increasing in popularity.

### Domiciliary Midwifery

The District Nurses attend all cases and when necessary consult the private practitioner. Maternity beds are available in Crewkerne, Yeovil and Taunton for necessitous cases. Apart from obstetrical reasons, these are available for mothers having their first baby, those living in unsatisfactory home conditions, or for any case in which the District Nurse or Private Practitioner consider it necessary that the patient be in hospital during her confinement. The District Nurses' equipment includes anaesthetic machines, a development of recent years.

### Health Visiting

The District Nurses carry out health visiting in Crewkerne and their diligence has been responsible for the increasing use made of the Child Welfare Clinic and other services. A special health visitor is in charge of all Tuberculosis patients living in the district.

### Home Nursing

The District Nurses visit the homes and carry out home nursing as required. This has been but one of their many duties which are often overlooked by the public and for this reason I have included

some details of their work in 1951. Twenty-seven home deliveries were dealt with during the year. In addition thirty-four mothers confined in hospital were nursed following return to their homes. In all our two district nurses made 5,785 visits to houses during the period under review.

### Immunisation

A scheme for the routine immunisation of school children in Crewkerne was put into operation in 1941. A small number of pre-school children had been immunised by General Practitioners prior to this but it is interesting to note that in 1934 there were thirteen cases of Diphtheria in Crewkerne, in 1940 there were again thirteen cases reported, in 1941 when the scheme was commenced three were notified and since that time there has never been a case of Diphtheria in the town. This is a very dramatic and satisfactory result of the Diphtheria Immunisation Campaign. During 1951 I immunised ninety-five school children against Diphtheria and seventy-one were given combined immunisation against Whooping Cough and Diphtheria at the Clinic. At the request of General Practitioners, I also inoculated a few persons against Typhoid and Cholera before they left for visits to foreign countries.

### Vaccination

During the year I continued to stress the value of vaccination to all persons attending the Child Welfare Clinic. The Nurses did likewise when visiting the homes and as a result a total of fifty-seven were done at the Clinic. In 1944 there was a small pox scare in the area and many were vaccinated, but comparatively few since.

### Home Help Service

The County Home Help Service so valuable in times of confinement, illness and old age, is well established in this area and has worked smoothly when required. This service commenced in 1949 following the passing of the National Health Service Act.

### School Medical Service

The School Medical Service is organised by the County Education Committee but the local administration is left to me and during the year I visited the five schools twice each. At these inspections 495 children were examined and 95 immunised. Full details are shown in Appendix B Table 1. In this connection I would like to point out to parents the considerable advantage which their children have over those children attending private schools where no routine inspection is made, and no systematic Diphtheria Immunisation carried out. The routine inspection of all children three times during their school career and the follow up of all defects is an essential part of the Preventative Health Services and is doubtless responsible for the improved health and physique of the mass of England's children during the last fifty years.

### Dental Service

Unfortunately one of the most unsatisfactory features of the 1946 National Health Service Act was to completely destroy the structure of the School Dental Services all over the country. The financial reward offered to the Private Practitioner under the Act proved so attractive that there were a very large number of resignations by those holding local government appointments. Somerset was no exception and what had previously been a model service has now become almost non-existent. Reference to Table 1 in this section will show when each of the Crewkerne Schools last received a routine Dental inspection. Since that time the school children's dentition has deteriorated and until very recently Crewkerne children were in a very bad way. As I mentioned in my last report a Private Dental



Practitioner came to Crewkerne and immediately tackled this enormous problem. As a result I am pleased to be able to say that there has been a considerable improvement during the last year and now I think that Crewkerne children compare favourably with those in any part of the County where no routine inspection is carried out. A school Dental Clinic which is housed in the Health Clinic in Church Street is well equipped but has never yet been used owing to the fact that the terms of service offered by the Somerset County Council have failed to attract a Dental Practitioner.

#### Ophthalmic Services

All children in County Council Schools have their eyes examined by the School Medical Officer and any defects are referred to the County Occulist who in turn will refer them to specialists when necessary. The supply and repair of glasses is carried out by local opticians who have been most helpful in securing priority for urgent cases. There has been little, if any delay in obtaining spectacles during the year. Cases of squint are referred to a specialist for operative treatment and I regret to say that there have been very great delays in these cases, sometimes as long as four years.

#### Ambulance Service

The Ambulance was used on 135 occasions covering a mileage of 2,909. Mr. Sutton continues to organise and drive the ambulance and is mainly responsible for such a satisfactory years' work. I note that in the Medical Officer's Report for 1933 he states that an ambulance had only been equipped for the first time that year. It was purchased by voluntary contributions. Previously the nearest available ambulance was at Yeovil or Taunton.

#### National Assistance Act

In no case was it found necessary to apply to the Court for an order of removal. During the year this Act was revised to facilitate action when necessary.

### SECTION C

#### Prevalence of and control over Infectious Diseases and other Diseases

Summary of notifications will be found in Appendix C, Table 1.

There was a mild Measles epidemic during the year, 72 cases were notified. Measles has always been the most prevalent infectious disease recorded. In 1950 there were 98 cases, 1944 87, and in 1941 139. Fortunately the complications of the disease are better understood and controlled by the use of new drugs.

There were three cases of Puerperal Pyrexia. The Regulations controlling the notification of this disease were altered during the year so that a temperature of 100.4°F occurring on one occasion in the Puerperium has to be notified previously it had to be sustained for twenty-four hours. This probably accounts for the slight rise in the number notified but over the last ten years there has been a significant fall in the number of cases, undoubtedly due to the widespread use of the Sulphonamide group of drugs and latterly of Penicillin.

There was no case of Infantile Paralysis, indeed Crewkerne has been very fortunate in escaping for some years, in fact only three notifications have been received in the last twenty years.



There was one case of Tuberculosis notified. Looking back at the number of notifications shown in Appendix C, Table 1, you will notice that there has been a steady decline in the incidence of this disease since the War. It is most satisfactory and is undoubtedly due to better nutrition and improved housing conditions for a great number of people.

All cases of infectious disease requiring hospitalisation are sent to South Petherton Isolation Hospital. This modern building on pavilion lines, was opened in 1938 and has proved of very great value to the area, particularly during the War years.

Cases of Tuberculosis are admitted to the Chard Sanatorium when necessary. B.C.G. immunisation is available there for particular categories of people who are most liable to be exposed to the infection.

The Mass Radiography Unit again visited the town and Appendix C, Table 2 shows full details of the survey. It shows that out of a total of 532 examined, only one case of active tuberculosis was found. The early diagnosis of tuberculosis is essential if the patient is to make a rapid and satisfactory recovery. Slowly the public are realising this and the response is encouraging.

## SECTION D

### Environmental Health Services

#### A. Sanitary Circumstances

Climatic conditions. The weather was extremely wet and the summer one of the worst for many years. This lack of sun may have had some influence on the unduly large amount of minor sickness which occurred in the closing months of the year.

Water Supply. The supply proved adequate throughout the year. This was not surprising considering the heavy rainfall. Routine sampling was carried out throughout the year. All samples were satisfactory. There are 1,289 houses in Crewkerne on the main supply and 10 houses supplied by stand pipe. Seven houses rely on well water.

#### Drainage and Sewage

The sewage disposal system at the south end of the town, despite its inadequacy, is still in operation. However, the Sanitary Inspector has been endeavouring to produce an alternative scheme which would divert a larger flow to the northern outflow where the works are of modern type and in excellent order.

I hope to be able to state that the scheme has reached fruition in my next report.

#### Public Cleansing and Refuse Collection

Weekly removal of refuse from each house is carried out in the town. This, though satisfactory, cannot be regarded as progress as I note that in 1937 a twice weekly collection was made. The roads have been kept in an excellent state of cleanliness throughout the year and this aspect of the town must strike the very large number of travellers passing through each year.

Paper salvage and the collection of pig swill has been carried out regularly and has been a considerable help in keeping down the rates. However, it is felt that more people could co-operate in both

these collections. It is hoped that next year there will be an even better response.

### Rodent Destruction

Routine treatments were carried out on the Council's properties and at private buildings on request. In addition the survey of the town and test baiting of sewers was continued. No heavy infestation has been reported at any time during the year.

### Swimming Bath

The Swimming Bath which has been closed for some years was finally disposed of. This bath was constructed by the Council in 1935 and the Medical Officer reporting that year, stated that the water for the bath is derived from a stream and conveyed to the bath by means of a 6" Cast Iron Pipe. There are no provisions made for purifying the water either before it enters the bath or while the bath is in use. This of course was one of the major reasons for the bath being closed in 1948. Samples of the water taken then showed gross contamination on every occasion. Subsequently it was discovered that owing to faulty design in construction, the back of the bath was broken and contaminated water was entering through the base. Following expert advice it was found that the cost of repair and installation of adequate filtration plant was uneconomic and the money would be much better spent on a new bath.

The Swimming Bath at the Grammar School was regularly sampled and proved satisfactory.

### Factories Act

The Statistics will be found in Appendix D, Table 1.

### Housing

Reference to Appendix D, Table 11 will show the progress made during the year.

It will be seen that another 27 houses were completed during the year and the total now in the district is 1291 of which the Local Authority owns 227. This is not too great a proportion of the whole but when it is realised that of the 112 post war houses completed, 102 of them belong to the Local Authority, it must be obvious that if this tendency continues it will not be long before the number of houses owned by the District Council will have become too great a proportion of the whole and the situation economically unsound.

At the end of the year there were still 125 applications for Council houses. Added to this there are approximately 130 unfit houses still occupied. This gives some estimate of the town's requirements in the next few years.

During 1951 the Council made considerable progress towards extending the Severalls building site and they are in the process of seeking Ministerial sanction to the erection of 24 houses in the near future and a further 52 later, making a total of 76 are scheduled for erection in this area.

### C. Inspection and Supervision of Food

Milk There are five registered distributors in the area and 14 dairy premises. No sampling was carried out during the year.

Ice Cream There is only one registered premises for the manufacture and retail of ice cream. Sixteen are registered for the retail of pre-packed products. Regular sampling was done during the year, all proving satisfactory with the exception of the one shop where the ice cream was manufactured on the premises. This case was

followed up and kept under careful surveillance.

Meat There is one slaughterhouse in the town used by the Ministry of Food. The number of animals slaughtered during the year was 26,369. Regular meat inspections were carried out by the Sanitary Inspector and the approximate weight of meat condemned was:-

for Tuberculosis	1,600 lbs.
for other diseases	10,376 lbs.

Only a small proportion of the meat slaughtered is consumed locally.

There are no knackers' yards in the Urban District.

The Council adopted Byelaws under Section 15 of the Food and Drugs Act 1938. These cover the handling and wrapping of food and came into operation on 27th February, 1950. No statutory action was taken under the Act but routine inspection of shops was carried out.



APPENDIX A TABLE 1

Registrar General's estimate of population mid 1951	.....	.....	.....	3,927
Area	.....	.....	.....	1,291 acres
Number of inhabited houses at the end of 1951 according to the Rate Book				1,296
Rateable Value	.....	.....	.....	£22,617
Sum represented by a penny rate			.....	£85.5s.0d

APPENDIX A TABLE 2

CREWKERNE 1951

BIRTH RATE		M	F
Live Births	Total	25	38
	Legitimate	22	38
	Illegitimate	1	-
Still Births	Total	-	1
	Legitimate	-	1
	Illegitimate	-	-
Deaths of infants under 1 year	Total	-	-
Birth Rate	15.5 per thousand		

APPENDIX A TABLE 3

CREWKERNE 1951

TABLE OF DEATHS	Total	M	F
	57	32	25
Death Rate	14.5 per thousand		
<u>Causes of Death</u>	Total	M	F
Heart Disease	20	12	8
Other Diseases of the Circulatory System	7	3	4
Cancer, all forms	6	4	2
Respiratory Diseases	13	8	5
Other Diseases (Ill defined)	11	5	6

APPENDIX B TABLE 1

CREWKERNE SCHOOLS

Name of school	No.In- spected	No.Im- munised	Date of Inspection	Date of last Dental Inspection	Children Having milk	Children having dinners
Crewkerne Boys'	30 28	24	5.3.51 3.11.51	October 1947	99.05% 98.11%	47.62% 45.23%
Crewkerne Girls'	44		12.3.51	October 1947	85.41%	39.02%
Crewkerne Grammar	51 50		24.5.51 20.11.51	Not done	90 % 100%	88.66% 100%
Crewkerne Infants	61 62	71	11.7.51 14.11.51	May 1948	100% 100%	25% 29.07%
Crewkerne Secondary Modern	81 88 <u>495</u>		23.4.51 12.12.51	March 1950	62.96% 62.96%	36.36% 33.33%

APPENDIX C      TABLE 1

## Infectious Diseases

Scarlet Fever	1
Puerperal Pyrexia	3
Acute Primary Pneumonia	1
Measles	72
Whooping Cough	<u>5</u>
	82

## ANALYSIS OF CASES NOTIFIED

	Under 1 yr.	1 - 2	2 - 3	3 - 4	4 - 5	5 - 10	10-15	15-20	20-35	35-45	45-65	65 +
Scarlet Fever							1					
Pneumonia									1			
Measles		6	6	9	15	31	4		1			
Whooping Cough			1	2	1		1					

TUBERCULOSIS

	<u>New Cases</u>				<u>Deaths</u>			
<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Respiratory</u>		<u>Non-Respiratory</u>		<u>Respiratory</u>		<u>Non-Respiratory</u>	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
- 1								
1 - 5								
5 - 15								
15 - 25								
25 - 35								
35 - 45		1						
45 - 55								
55 - 65					1			
65 +								
Totals	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-



# APPENDIX C TABLE 2

## MASS RADIOGRAPHY

Report of survey at Crewkerne, May, 1951.

		Male	Female	Total
<u>Miniature Films</u>	Total	338	194	532
<u>Large Films</u>	Total Recalled	5	11	14
	Did not attend	1	-	1
	Normal	-	4	4
	Significant	-	6	6
	Under observation	2	1	3

<u>Tuberculous Conditions</u>	<u>Active</u>	M	F	Total	N.A.	Dr.	Disp.	San.
	Primary Lesion			-				
	Post-Primary unilateral			-				
	Post-Primary bilateral	1	1				1	
	Tuberculous Pleural effusion			-				
	Total	1	1				1	
	<u>Inactive</u>							
	Primary Lesion	1	1			1		
	Post-Primary Lesion	3	3			1	2	
	Total	4	4			2	2	

N.A. = No action  
 Dr. = Patient's own doctor  
 Disp. = Under observation at Dispensary  
 San. = Sanatorium treatment required

## Analysis of Tuberculous Cases

<u>Active Tuberculosis</u>	Under 15	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-59	60 +	Total
Male							
Female			1				1
Total			1				1
<u>Inactive Tuberculosis</u>							
Male							
Female			3		1		4
Total			3		1		4

# APPENDIX D TABLE 1

## Factories Act 1937

Inspections for the purpose of provisions as to Health  
(including Inspections made by the Sanitary Inspector)

Premises	Number on Register	Inspections	Written Notices	Occupiers Prosecuted
Factories in which Section 1,2,3,4 and 6, are to be en- forced by Local Authorities	8	12	3	Nil
Factories not in- cluded in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority	41	5	5	Nil
Total	49	17	8	Nil
Cases in which defects were found		.....	8	1
Cases in which defects found were remedied		.....	8	1

## Outwork

No. of Outworkers  
in August List  
required by Section 110 ..... 50 (making wearing apparel)

# APPENDIX D TABLE 2

## HOUSING

	Houses erected during the year		Houses in course of erection		Conversion to Flats or Dwellings		Temporary such as Army Huts, etc.
	Perm.	Temp.	Perm.	Temp.	Perm.	Temp.	
Local Authority	24	-	8	-	-	-	-
Private Enter- prise	3	-	1	-	5	-	-
Total	27	-	9	-	5	-	-

Inclusive of those above built during the year  
Total number of houses in District ..... 1,299  
" " " " owned by Local Authority ..... 227

## No. of post war houses erected to 31st December, 1951

By Local Authority                      By Private Enterprise  
102    10

- |     |   |       |           |
|-----|---|-------|-----------|
| (a) | No. of unfit houses in the District but on which no<br>formal action has been taken ..... | ..... | 10%       |
| (b) | No. of houses that have been condemned under the<br>Housing Acts as totally unfit.....    | ..... | Nil       |
| (c) | No. of houses occupied under (a).....   | ..... | 130       |
| (d) | No. of houses found overcrowded .....   | ..... | Not known |

## Houses required

- |     |                                  |       |     |
|-----|----------------------------------|-------|-----|
| (i) | To replace those unfit under (a) | ..... | 130 |
|-----|----------------------------------|-------|-----|

Total number number of applicants for Council Houses at the end of the year 125